# COVID-19 Vaccine: Booster Shots Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## FAQs: Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shots

1. **What is the purpose of a booster shot?**
   The initial vaccine series remains effective in reducing the likelihood of infection and preventing severe illness, hospitalization, or death among those infected. The purpose of a booster is to "boost" antibody protection back up when it has decreased over time.

2. **Will I need to receive a booster shot?**
   o Individuals who **should** get a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster dose according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include:

      - People 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings who received a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 primary vaccine series at least 6 months ago

      - People aged 50–64 years with underlying medical conditions who received a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 primary vaccine series at least 6 months ago

   o Individuals who **may** opt to get a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster dose, based on their individual benefits and risks, include:

      - People aged 18–49 years with underlying medical conditions who received a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 primary vaccine series at least 6 months ago, based on their individual benefits and risks

      - People aged 18-64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting who received a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 primary vaccine series at least 6 months ago, based on their individual benefits and risks

3. **If supply is limited, what will be VA's focus?**
   VA's first focus will be on persons for whom CDC recommends a booster, including persons 65 years and older, Veterans in the Community Living Centers and Spinal Cord Injury units, and persons aged 50–64 years with underlying medical conditions. Next priority will be ensuring access for those for whom the vaccine may not be recommended but may be given depending on individual risk.

4. **Where can people get the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster vaccine?**
   You have many options of where to receive your booster shot at no cost to you, both in and outside of VA. If you choose to get your vaccine outside of VA, you can locate a vaccine site at Vaccines.gov - Search for COVID-19 vaccine locations. Make sure to bring your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card when you go!

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5. **I received the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna or Janssen (Johnson & Johnson or J&J) COVID-19 vaccine, when will I be able to receive my booster shot?**
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech booster shots on September 22, 2021. The FDA and CDC continue to review data to determine whether and when a booster might be recommended for recipients of the Moderna and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccines. VHA will plan to offer these booster vaccines when they are authorized by the FDA and recommended by the CDC.

6. **If I don't remember the brand of COVID-19 vaccine that I initially received, can I still get the Pfizer-BioNTech booster?**
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend mixing brands when receiving the booster. At this time, only individuals who received initial doses of Pfizer-BioNTech should receive the Pfizer-BioNTech booster dose. If you do not remember the brand, please check your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card, or request the information from the location that you received your initial COVID-19 vaccine.

7. **I received initial series of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, do I need proof of age or that I am high risk of severe COVID-19 to get the booster?**
If you receive your care from the VA, we have record of your age and your risk of severe COVID-19. We will work to reach out to individuals at highest risk from COVID-19 to make sure they are aware of the recommendation for a booster. If you receive your care outside of the VA, you should bring your vaccine card with you to your visit, and we will rely on self-report of your high-risk condition or occupation.

8. **Can I get the flu shot at the same appointment as my COVID-19 vaccine?**
Yes. Flu vaccines are recommended for everyone and can be given during the same visit for COVID-19 vaccination. At this time, we cannot offer flu vaccines to individuals who are not eligible for VA care, but who receive COVID-19 vaccines through the SAVE LIVES Act. However, flu vaccines should also be readily available in the community.

9. **Will VA contact me if I need a booster shot?**
Veterans who receive care in VA and are recommended for booster shots will be identified through the VA's Veterans Outreach Tool, then contacted and advised of the recommended booster shots. Facilities may offer boosters by appointment or on a walk-in basis.

Veterans who received a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine outside of VA, as well as those who received a Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in VA for whom we don't have records of their high-risk condition, will need to contact their local VA facility for information about how they can receive their booster shot.

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Those who received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine under authorization of the SAVE LIVES Act and are due for a booster shot can contact their local VA facility for an appointment or information about walk-in hours.

10. **What if I receive my booster shot outside of VA?**
    If you decide to get a COVID-19 booster vaccine outside of VA, we encourage you to share this information with your VA health care team. You can send a picture of your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card to your VA provider through secure messaging. You can also add your vaccine information to your **MyHealtheVet** health summary for your own records. To add your information, you'll need a premium **MyHealtheVet** account. Learn more about managing your COVID-19 vaccine records online.

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